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Joint Order, Establishing the Task Force on Maine's 21st Century Economy and Workforce

WHEREAS, historically, Maine has been world-renowned for its hard-working people, its enviable quality of life and its production of high-quality products; and

WHEREAS, for generations, citizens of the State had jobs in industries such as logging, shipbuilding, papermaking, textiles, manufacturing, farming and fishing that allowed workers to live and raise families in the State; and

WHEREAS, jobs that supported a thriving Maine economy were responsible for decades of growth in many of our communities in the State, but over the years, jobs that provided living wages, benefits and job security became harder and harder to find; and

WHEREAS, as the prospects for well-paying jobs diminished in the rapidly changing world economy, so too did Maine's ability to retain its young people, who increasingly sought opportunities elsewhere, contributing to Maine's looming demographic crisis; and

WHEREAS, a prosperous Maine economy will require skilled workers capable of succeeding in the modern economy as well as innovative investments that will help Maine businesses grow and thrive; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that the Legislature work with the State's businesses, education community and workforce, as well as with policy experts, to develop and implement measures to strengthen the State's economy, bring back jobs and young people and expand the middle class; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Joint Select Committee on Maine's Workforce and Economic Future in the 126th Legislature worked together in a bipartisan manner with input from experts throughout the State to unanimously support legislation to help move Maine toward stronger economic growth and to prepare Maine's workers and businesses to compete in the global marketplace; now, therefore, be it

ORDERED, the House concurring, that, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the Task Force on Maine's 21st Century Economy and Workforce, referred to in this order as "the task force," is established as follows.

1. Appointments; composition. The task force consists of members appointed as follows:

A. Four members of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate, including 2 members of the party holding the largest and 2 members of the party holding the 2nd largest number of seats in the Senate;

B. Four members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, including 2 members of the party holding the largest and 2 members of the party holding the 2nd largest number of seats in the House of Representatives;

- C. One member representing the interests of the Maine Community College System, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- D. One member representing the interests of the University of Maine System, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- E. One member representing the interests of apprenticeship programs in the State, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- F. One member representing the interests of providers and teachers of adult education in the State, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- G. One member representing the interests of private colleges in the State, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- H. One member representing the statewide interests of the business community, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- I. One member representing the interests of a Maine business that employs more than 1,000 workers, appointed by the President of the Senate; and
- J. One member representing the interests of a Maine business that employs fewer than 1,000 workers, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall invite to participate as members of the task force the Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee, and the Commissioner of Labor, or the commissioner's designee.

2. Chairs. The first-named Senator is the Senate chair of the task force and the first-named member of the House of Representatives is the House chair of the task force. Notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the chairs may appoint, as nonvoting members, individuals who represent the interests of those sectors of industry that have experienced significant workforce shortages. Any additional members appointed pursuant to this section are not entitled to compensation or reimbursement under section 5.

3. Appointments; convening. All appointments must be made no later than 15 days following passage of this order. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative Council once all appointments have been made. When the appointment of all members has been completed, the chairs of the task force shall call and convene the first meeting of the task force. If 15 days or more after the passage of this order a majority of but not all appointments have been made, the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority for the task force to meet and conduct its business.

4. Duties. The task force shall review ways to strengthen the State's economy, improve the State's business climate and facilitate economic growth in the State, including strategies to make targeted and strategic investments in the State's workforce and businesses; to expand partnerships among the State's workers, educators and businesses to specifically address workforce needs and worker training; to develop strategies for attracting, retaining and training Maine workers in sectors of industry most acutely affected by workforce shortage, as identified in priority order by the Maine Department of Labor, including health

care, government, retail trade, professional and business services and the hospitality industry; and to help improve the ability of small businesses to innovate and expand.

5. Compensation. The legislative members of the task force are entitled to receive the legislative per diem, as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 3, section 2, and reimbursement for travel and other necessary expenses related to their attendance at authorized meetings of the task force. Public members not otherwise compensated by their employers or other entities that they represent are entitled to receive reimbursement of necessary expenses and, upon a demonstration of financial hardship, a per diem equal to the legislative per diem for their attendance at authorized meetings of the task force.

6. Quorum. A quorum is a majority of the voting members of the task force, including those members invited to participate who have accepted the invitation to participate.

7. Staffing. The Legislative Council shall contract for necessary staff support for the task force during the legislative session and may contract for such staff support for a longer period to the extent needed and if sufficient funding is available. At the request of the task force, the Legislative Council may provide drafting assistance to the task force during the legislative session and other staffing support to the task force when the Legislature is not in session.

8. Reports. The task force may submit an initial report, including suggested legislation, prior to the adjournment of the First Regular Session of the 128th Legislature. No later than March 1, 2018, the task force shall submit a final report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, for introduction to the Second Regular Session of the 128th Legislature.